

NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION (NCRTPO)

The North Central Regional Transportation Planning Organization (NCRTPO) area includes all of Chelan, Douglas, and Okanogan Counties, and a portion of the Colville Confederated Tribes. This region of vast contrasts contains snow-capped mountains and valleys of orchards, cattle ranches and agricultural cropland; urban centers and rural communities; high deserts and rivers and lakes. This region is known for its world-class fruits and vegetables, hydroelectric power production, and its variety of year-round recreational opportunities.



Tower Mountain from SR 20 North Cascades Highway.



Chelan Falls vicinity across the Columbia River.

Major Transportation Facilities:

NCRTPO has various principal transportation facilities that provide vital access into, out of, and within the region. State Route 97 is a significant international route that connects Eastern British Columbia with the major cross-Cascade routes. The Odabashian Bridge and Blewett Pass provide vital links from I-90 to the north/south US 97 traffic. State Route 28 connects the greater Wenatchee urban center with I-90. State Route 20, across the North Cascade passes, links the region's communities with Western Washington and British Columbia. State Route 2 provides an additional link to Puget Sound communities through Stevens Pass. The LINK transit system serves Chelan and Douglas Counties. Pangborn Memorial Airport is located in East Wenatchee and is vital to air travel in the region.

Demographics:

The population of this three-county RTPO was 138,783 in 2000. This represents 2.4 percent of the state population.

| | Population (2000) | Persons Per Square Mile | Median Household Income (1997) |
|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Washington State: | 5,894,121 | 88.6 | \$41,715 |
| Chelan County: | 66,616 | 22.8 | \$33,882 |
| Douglas County: | 32,603 | 17.9 | \$35,999 |
| Okanogan County: | 39,564 | 7.5 | \$27,453 |

NCRTPO Freight Facts:

- The average daily freight hauled on State Route 2 is 4,746 tons — wood and lumber products make up 45% of total tonnage.
- The average daily freight hauled on State Route 20 is 1,370 tons.
- The average daily freight hauled on State Route 97 is 1,596 tons.

Eastern Washington Intermodal Transportation Study November 1996 (Note: the freight flows have dramatically changed since this report, see Freight Movement section for more information)

Freight Movement:

It is estimated that NAFTA commodity trade on the state's highways will increase 30 percent in the years 1998-2005. Almost 70 percent of this trade will not have an origin or destination in Washington State (Source: *Highway 97 Corridor Border Region Coalition*). This pattern puts a premium on through routes like US 97. In fact, US 97 has a higher highway pavement damage coefficient than I-5 and US 395. The damage per ton-miles to US 97 is seven times greater than I-5 and 50 percent greater than US 395 (Source: *WSU EWITS Research Report #25, November 1998*). Recognizing that a rapid increase of freight traffic between British Columbia and the United

States is occurring, US 97 was recently upgraded to a Strategic Freight Corridor status.

Truck Freight — Truck traffic in Okanogan, Chelan, and Douglas County region is closely tied to the fruit industry. Wenatchee is the center of fruit packing and shipping within this three-county area and the main generator of truck trips. The main destinations for trucks from this region are evenly distributed between Eastern Washington, Western Washington, and out of state. The majority of truck trips utilize US 97.

Rail Freight — The types of freight moved by rail include express intermodal trailers and containers, manufactured goods and merchandise, farm and food products.

Railroad lines serving this region are: Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Cascade and Columbia River Railroad. Amtrak provides passenger service.

Economic Trends:

The North Central region's economy is largely based on agriculture. A downturn in the fruit market has negatively impacted the agricultural industry in the region. Investments in the regional transportation system will potentially reduce transportation costs, which can lead to tremendous benefits for both producers and consumers that can be felt throughout the regional economy.

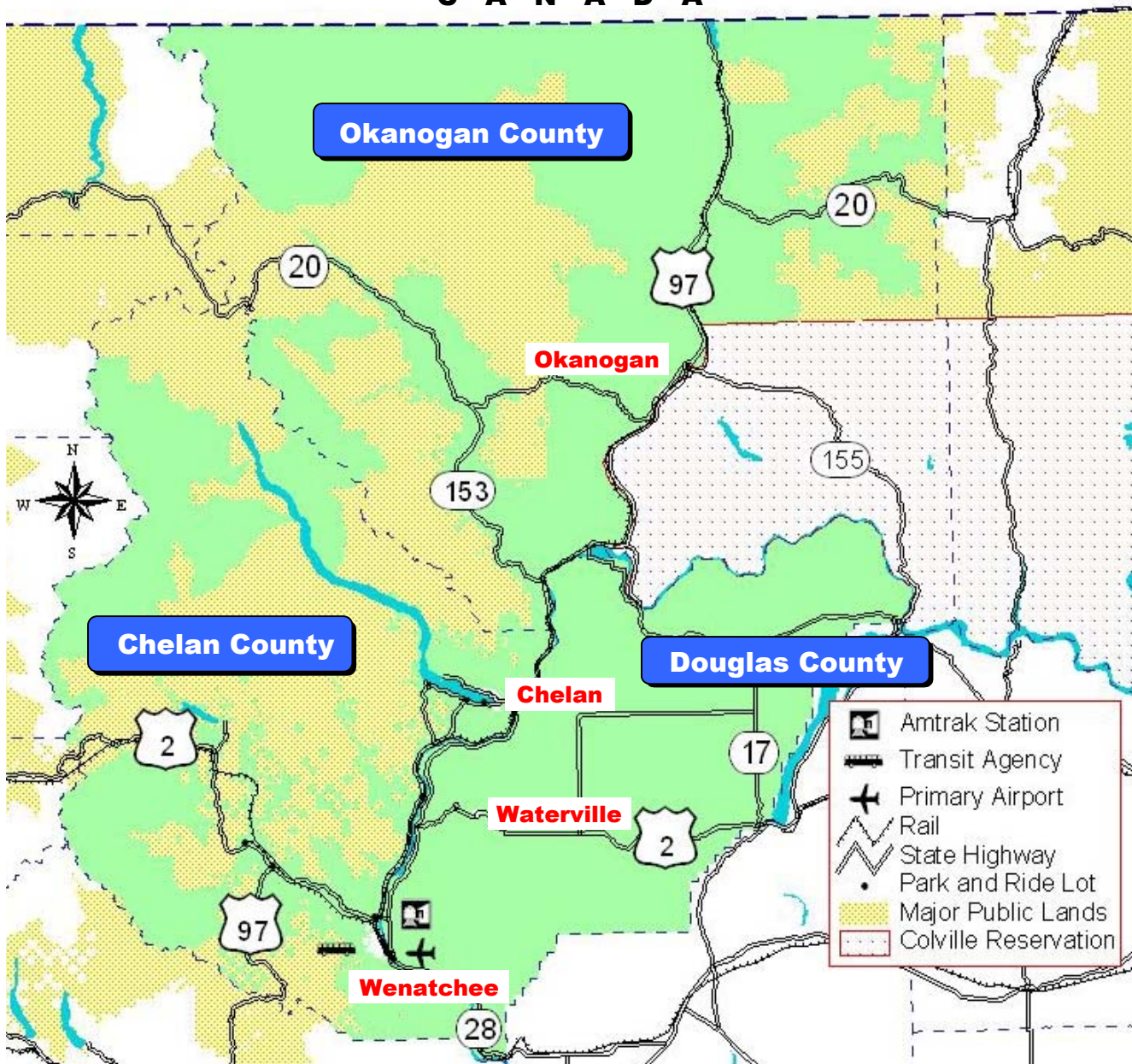


Red Delicious apples ripening on the tree.

NCRTPO Transportation Facts:

- Between 1970 and 1997 population grew 57%, while registered vehicles increased 114%.
- Between 1990 and 1997 population grew 18%, employment 18% and vehicle miles traveled grew 26%.

C A N A D A



Members: Counties: Chelan, Douglas, and Okanogan;

Cities: Brewster, Bridgeport, Cashmere, Chelan, Conconully, Coulee Dam, East Wenatchee, Elmer City, Entiat, Leavenworth, Mansfield, Nespalem, Okanogan, Omak, Oroville, Pateros, Riverside, Rock Island, Tonasket, Twisp, Waterville, Wenatchee, and Winthrop;

Transit Agencies: Link and Okanogan PTBA,

Ports Districts: Port of Chelan County and Port of Douglas County;

Tribal Nations: Colville Confederated Tribes;

State Agency: WSDOT

Transportation Priorities:

US 97:

US 97 is a vital North/South freight and tourism route that directly serves all three NCRTPO counties. It is also a major through route that serves the increasing population and trade between Canada, United States and Mexico.

**NCRTPO Needs
Freight Movement projects:**
State Highways \$39.1 million

US 97 poses several year-round challenges to freight haulers and tourists, which include:

**NCRTPO Needs
Congestion Management projects:**
State Highways \$696.1 million

- High summer and winter congestion due to tourist traffic.
- Few passing opportunities on Blewett Pass lead to slow-moving traffic behind freight and recreational vehicles. Accidents also occur while frustrated drivers take unnecessary risks to pass at unsafe locations.
- Locations like US 2/US 97 intersection are unsafe due to the high traffic volumes and conflicting turning movements.

The NCRTPO recognizes that US 97 is extremely important to the region's economy and has placed a high priority on projects that maintain the efficiency and safety of the corridor. Some of the projects of high priority are:

- Interchange at US 2/US 97 at the Big Y improvement project.
- The addition of passing lanes on US 97 through Blewett Pass.

**NCRTPO Needs
Operations, Maintenance,
Preservation & Special Needs
projects:**

State-Interest Facilities
Aviation \$4.7 million
Transit \$175.1 million

The NCRTPO also continues to support efforts like the multi-national Highway 97 Border Region Coalition.

**NCRTPO Needs
Congestion Management projects:**
State-Interest Facilities
Transit \$37.6 million

SR 28:

A study conducted by Washington State University demonstrates the economic impacts the transportation industry has on the Eastern Washington economy. The study concludes that more than 75 percent of manufacturing firms in the region rely on motor freight to deliver or receive products. For firms in Eastern

Washington, 43 percent of manufacturing firms and 54 percent of the retail/service firms indicated that locating near an interstate highway was an important factor in their location decision.

Because the region is not connected to an interstate highway by a 4-lane highway, it is experiencing a competitive disadvantage in attracting new industry and retaining its existing industry. The efficiency of the region's transportation system is also degraded by winter traveling conditions in the passes. Due to heavy snowfall, it is not uncommon to experience pass closures. The only route that connects the region to the west that does not traverse a mountain pass is SR 28 to I-90.

Some of high priority projects identified by the NCRTPO to address these problems are:

- Obtain the needed resources for the implementation of the preferred alternative that will arise from the Eastside Corridor Environmental Impact Study (EIS).
- Increase SR 28 to four lanes from the Grant Road/SR 28 intersection to I-90.

Rural Character and Economic Opportunities:

Agriculture, recreation, and tourism make up a large portion of the region's economy. With the loss of agricultural jobs and revenue, the region needs to diversify the economy and ensure that freight can be moved effectively within the major corridors of the region.

The Puget Sound population is increasingly utilizing the abundance of year-round recreational opportunities in the region. US 2, a major gateway into the region, is experiencing an increasing amount of congestion throughout the corridor. Investments in the region's transportation system will provide the potential for increased tourism.



Wheat Country on the Columbia Plateau

Some strategies identified by the NCRTPO to enhance the region's ability to improve the economy include:

- Continued research to address issues and initiatives that could include highway branding, promotion, infrastructure development, and border crossing issues.
- Further research and implementation of freight and tourist movement alternatives that utilize railways and airports.



Spillway at Rocky Reach Dam

Transit, Bike and Pedestrian Transportation:

The region recognizes the importance of transit, bike and pedestrian facilities and continues to make investments in them, including the Apple Capital Loop Trail. Some of the priorities in the region include safe routes to schools and major public facilities, connections to existing pathways, improving sections of roadways with less than desirable side of the road shoulder room, and improving connections from residential areas to transit stops.

Examples of projects submitted by the RTPO:

- Connecting the Apple Capital Loop Trail to US 97 Alternate.
- Construction of a pedestrian bridge in Omak that crosses the Okanogan River and connects the fairgrounds to a major shopping district.
- Sidewalk, curb, and safe roadway crossings from neighborhoods to schools and essential public facilities located in several communities.



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**

